

MINUTES
Conservation Commission Regular Meeting
February 2, 2022, 7:00 p.m.
Room 135, Town Hall, 100 Pocono Road, Brookfield, CT 06804

1. Call to Order

Chair J. Bronn called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

Present: Chair J. Bronn, Vice Chair J. Blick, Regular Member C. DePoi, Regular Member M. Carmody, Regular Member T. Cappiello and Alternate Member A. Schutte-Bell

Also Present: Land Use Director R. Hodza and Recording Secretary A. Kennedy

Absent: Alternate Member M. Dew and Alternate Member R. Blessey

2. Minutes from Previous Meeting:

- January 5, 2022

M. Carmody made a motion to approve the minutes from January 5, 2022, as submitted. Vice Chair J. Blick seconded the motion.

Chairman J. Bronn noted a correction to a name spelling and professional title: Paul Elconin, Director of Land Conservation from Northwest Connecticut Land Conservancy

Chairman J. Bronn made a motion to approve the minutes from January 5, 2022, as corrected. M. Carmody seconded the motion and it carried unanimously.

3. Guest and Public Comment

Alexa Larsen was present. She said she was concerned about invasive plants in the area and interested in ways to attract beneficial predators and pollinators.

Chris Brooks, Eagle Scout-Troop 5 was present. He discussed his recently completed project which included shrub cleanup at Old Bridge Bird Sanctuary, along with building two benches and ten birdhouses. He distributed before and after photos of the area, and described the work completed. He said there were a total of 32 volunteers on the project and between all of them, completed 187 hours of volunteer work. He said they have \$160 left over from their fundraising efforts and plan to add gravel to the top of the trail in the spring and possibly purchasing chains and locks for the benches. He also offered to use the money for any ideas the Commission may have as well. Chair J. Bronn asked if Chris earned his Eagle Scout recognition, and C. Brooks said he has, and there will be an upcoming ceremony, to which the Commission members will be invited.

Barbara Thomas, Monroe Conservation Commission and Holly Kocet, Newtown Conservation Commission were present. B. Thomas said they have been reaching out to different Conservation Commissions and Garden Clubs regarding their project to put together new Zoning regulations for their towns, pertaining to the use of native plants in commercial property landscapes. She explained that in a lot of commercial projects they have reviewed, the plantings that were being installed were predominantly non-native plants. She explained how important native plants are to the ecosystem and described her efforts to encourage use of native plants in Monroe. She said Newtown has already passed the new Zoning regulations, and she is still working on getting the regulation passed in Monroe. They are encouraging neighboring towns to adopt this type of regulation as well.

H. Kocet said in September the Newtown Board of Selectmen passed the Native Plant Policy for Municipal Landscapes. She discussed the CT invasive plant list and explained that those plants would be restricted from Municipal Landscapes in Newtown as well. She discussed the text amendments needed to the Zoning regulations as well, including updating definitions. H. Kocet said in their proposal they asked for 100% native trees, grasses, seeding and ground covers, 85% shrubs and 75% herbaceous perennials.

R. Hodza asked how they started these proposals in their towns, including which commissions they approached initially. B. Thomas discussed her approach in Monroe, which was starting in the Conservation Commission, and then the Planning and Zoning Commission. R. Hodza asked about possible enforcement issues with this type of regulation. B. Thomas and H. Kocet said there will be some enforcement from the building inspectors, and H. Kocet noted if the regulations are adopted it becomes law. B. Thomas said Monroe reached out to local engineer firms to discuss this topic and addressed push back from engineers and landscape architects. She said she researched cost comparison and availability of native plants versus non-native species and provided this information to the engineers and landscape architects.

Barbara Stauder, Brookfield Garden Club, Environment and Conservation (Master Gardener) was present. She said C. DePoi contacted her regarding putting in a pollinator garden in Eriksen, and the Brookfield Garden Club is in support of that project, as well as the Zoning regulation project discussed by B. Thomas and H. Kocet. She said she is not sure how the members of the Garden Club can help with the pollinator garden project, but they have experienced gardeners who are able to assist.

A. Schutte-Bell said she is meeting with T. Schaefer this weekend to discuss invasive plants, as they are trying to come up with a way to inform the public about this type of initiative through the library.

A. Schutte-Bell said another Master Gardener in town, Joanne McMillan, mentioned to her that poison hemlock had been found in Eriksen. T. Cappiello said they treated that last year and hopefully got it soon enough that it will not recur.

4. Correspondence

Chair J. Bronn discussed correspondence from First Selectman T. Carr regarding F. Lollie receiving a stipend to manage the houses on the Town properties.

5. Treasurer's Report

Chair J. Bronn noted that at the last meeting the Commission discussed greater treasury transparency. He said C. Murphy emailed a spreadsheet of the budget to the Commission members. The Commission discussed the recent expenses and available budget as noted on the spreadsheet.

6. Old Business

A. Invasive Plant Removal Project

Chairman J. Bronn reviewed previous discussions on this topic. He said he is in the process of having Betsy Corrigan from Northwest Conservation come out and do a survey of the property and noted she would not be able to do a full survey until the growing season began. He said the Commission previously discussed trying this project out at Eriksen, by mowing the knapweed. Vice Chair J. Blick said she called Andrea White regarding invasive removal. She said A. White couldn't think of anyone in CT who is in charge of invasive removal but would get back to her. Vice Chair J. Blick said A. White mentioned BIO Control for knapweed, and Vice Chair J. Blick said she wants to look into possible funding from the State. A. Schutte-Bell discussed a crowd funding training session and how to apply for grants. The Commission discussed trying multiple methods and evaluating their efficacy. Chairman J. Bronn said they will have to visit Eriksen to locate a site for a pollinator garden, etc. C. DePoi suggested putting the pollinator garden near the Giving Garden due to access to water in that location.

B. Educating the Public

A. Schutte-Bell said she is trying to start a program through the library. She said T. Schaefer is willing to volunteer her time to help. A. Schutte-Bell said they want to develop a slide show and will present it to the Commission first for review/approval.

7. New Business

A. Upcoming BCC Events

Chair J. Bronn discussed advertising and getting the word out to the public regarding future events. He said the Parks and Recreation Brochure is a great way to advertise, but they would need to get in by next month. Vice Chair J. Blick said they could use the Conservation Commission Facebook page, which is very popular, and the Town website. She also mentioned using the Spotlight.

1. Earth Day/Arbor Day

Chairman J. Bronn noted that last year they planted apple trees at Gurski. The Commission discussed the other activities they did last year for Earth Day.

R. Hodza noted that this year Earth Day is on 4/22 and Arbor Day is 4/29. The Commission discussed having an Event Date on 4/23, with a rain date of 4/30. Chair J. Bronn discussed coming up with a plan for an event over the next month and finalize the plans at the next meeting.

R. Hodza discussed the Arbor Day Foundation Tree City USA certification, and said the Town is still in the running. R. Hodza said she will look into it further and ask C. Murphy in the Land Use office to email the information to the Commission.

T. Cappiello said previously they planted birch trees outside Town Hall and suggested coming up with a location to plant a tree this year. He said he has spoken with the resident at the Nabby Road residence regarding spruce trees that were taken down by a car years ago. The tenant had asked if those could be replaced at some point. T. Cappiello said that would be one option for this year.

2. No Mow May

Chair J. Bronn said this is a month-long event and discussed getting more signs made. Vice Chair J. Blick said C. DePoi had made an eco-friendly scarecrow for the event.

3. CT Trails Day

B. Mowing Plan & Other Property Maintenance

- **Mowed Properties Spreadsheet**

The Commission discussed the schedule, and notes from A. Dew.

Chairman J. Bronn said they will ask F. Lollie to maintain the current schedule.

8. Tabled Items

T. Cappiello discussed renewing the lease for the Giving Garden, which expires in October. He will email the information to R. Hodza for assistance.

C. DePoi discussed a spot for the perennial garden.

Vice Chair J. Blick discussed the status of the kiosks. She discussed the one at Lillinonah with the Girls Scouts and will reach out to them again. She also mentioned the kiosks at Williams Park and Old Bridge. Chairman J. Bronn said he will need the measurements of the plexiglass and then will talk to the sign company.

A. Schutte-Bell discussed looking into a new member to replace R. Blessey on the Commission, as his term is expiring. Chairman J. Bronn said he has spoken with G. Giovanniello about this process and will continue to look into it.

9. Adjournment

Chairman J. Bronn made a motion to adjourn at 8:30 p.m. T. Cappiello seconded the motion and it carried unanimously.